1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

159 behaviour of an anti-social nature.[1] The foregoing analysis refers chiefly to those of the Ovimbundu who now live or were reared within their traditional social structure, with but slight reference to other individuals.

The Umbundu Estimate of Character

156 183 The Umbundu concept of personality as being achieved by a process of social integration is of fundamental importance, bearing in mind that society consists of the whole kinship group—including the living and the dead, men and spirits. The process of achieving integration together with reactions to various cultural elements interestingly reveal the types of character appreciated and those disliked by the Ovimbundu.

Almost everything in Umbundu life and culture reveals them to be a strong and aggressive people. Their history, whether of raiding or of trading, is eloquent testimony to this. The early age at which children participate and assume responsibility in social and economic life has doubtless contributed toward the development of aggressive attitudes. The system of marriage which places the balance of responsibility in all particulars upon the bridegroom and not on his elders, but at the same time requires the willing consent of the bride, is evidently a development of a strongly aggressive people. Their economic life witnesses to the same fact, whether one considers their trade or their agriculture. None but an aggressive (or a very stubborn) people could succeed at farming in a region of such poor soil. Basing his observations only on their pillage and robbery of all their neighbours, and on the submission of the latter, Magyar remarked that the Ovimbundu were the greatest people of South Africa.[2]

In view of these facts it is not difficult to understand that the Ovimbundu appreciate character integration which includes a high degree of self-expression. Such 'traits'[3] as drive, extroversion, insight, ascendance, and expansion[4] are desired and appreciated by the Ovimbundu. Introversion and reclusion, on the other hand, are disliked. In the more extreme forms they are feared and

[1] Stealing is one of the commonest types of behaviour in such cases.

[2] L. Magyar, *Reisen in Süd-Afrika*, p. 265.

[3] The term is used merely for convenience to cover types of behaviour. The specificity of the responses which make up character is assumed; cf. Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May, *Studies in the Nature of Character*, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1928–30).

[4] After Allport, op. cit., chap. v.

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suspected as indications of sorcery. It would of course be impossible to indicate what proportion achieve the ideal. It would seem that their respective manners of life have favoured its development in the men more largely than in the women. May this perhaps be one reason why women seem to be caught more often in the vicious circle of suspicion of sorcery?

Fearing anger and ill will as a root-cause of sorcery, yet developing a very aggressive type of character, and achieving in their villages and other social groupings such a large measure of socialized life, the adjustments in anger achieved have been, perhaps, a necessary prerequisite. That does not make the achievement any less important. Note has already been made of the ability to use humour as an outlet for anger, which is held to be an indication of true insight.[1]

Statesmanlike ability, good judgement, and dignity were often noted by the early missionaries as qualities of some of the old kings, councillors, and headmen.[2] After 1900 these qualities were less often observed, owing perhaps to the demoralizing effects of the rum trade. These qualities have, however, survived to the present day and may be observed in pastors, elders, teachers, and other leaders of the church. That shrewd behaviour (*oku lunguka*) is appreciated by this great trading people is easily understood, but it is not as universally or unreservedly admired as are some other types.

There is also a tender side to Umbundu character. It might conceivably be supposed that long-continued and intimate participation in such inhumane occupations as the slave-trade might leave a stamp of callous brutality on the character of the Ovimbundu generally.[3] On second thought a similar question might be raised with regard to Americans because of their participation in the same slave-traffic, or their more recent participation in equally ruthless practices under the banner of modern capitalism.

The rarity or absence among kings of the Ovimbundu of resort to 'revolting and wholesale punishments—so common at African courts' has been noted.[4] On the positive side, a most admirable

[1] Cf. Allport, op. cit., pp. 118, 344.

[2] Cf. *Missionary Herald*, 1883, p. 229; 1886, p. 143; 1887, pp. 26, 530, &c.

[3] H. W. Nevinson alleged some such effect. Cf. *A Modern Slavery*, chap. ii. The references are to people of Viye. The effects noted were more probably due to long association with Europeans.

[4] *Supra*, p. 21 f.

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156 tenderness towards and consideration for those weaker than one-
183 self, for women, for children, and for the aged may be seen among Ovimbundu who are quite untouched by Christianity or Christian teachings in any form. This was often noticed and remarked upon by the early missionaries.[1] Umbundu treatment of children, the habitually respectful form of address used in speaking to them, and respect for their personalities[2] is further evidence of this tender side of Umbundu character, as is also their banning of angry behaviour from the relations of the home.[3]

141 Such a combination of aggressive, dignified, and tender behaviour makes for character worthy of admiration. It is a heritage worth conserving and passing on to succeeding generations.

000 Description and analysis now hands the problem to education. I cannot find a more fitting close for this chapter than the following statement of the problem:

> From the obscurities that for us still hang about African childhood, the fact emerges that Africans do educate their children. It is a genuine education. . . . What the African sets out to do, namely, to prepare the new generation to take its place in the community and carry on the tribal tradition, he accomplishes with a very considerable measure of success. . . . What Mr. Bryant has said of the Zulus may be said of some other African tribes: 'Through the ages, this admirable system of forming character and imparting knowledge continued, until at length was evolved a Zulu race noble of heart, dignified of bearing, refined of manners, and learned in natural science—qualities, alas! rapidly dying out before the destructive and demoralizing advance of European civilization!' The concluding sentence applies to many a tribe. No small part of the demoralization is caused by the disturbance of family life through the prolonged absence of the senior males at work on European mines and plantations and through the flocking of boys to European towns; it is in the family life, as we have seen, that the most

[1] 'We saw a party crossing the Kulili (*Kulēlē*) River on a bridge of the frailest construction. The young men went first, deposited their loads on the bank, and returned for the loads of the old men, who carefully crept over unburdened. Then some of the young men recrossed and took their baskets from the women, and their babies as well. Last of all, two strong youths assisted the women themselves to cross. Nothing could be more tenderly considerate.

'Whatever customs may prevail in other parts of Africa, here it is entirely false to say that women are ill-treated. No one of either sex does any great amount of work, but such as it is is fairly divided. . . . They are certainly as well-treated as the wives of the poorer classes at home, and do infinitely less drudgery.' From a letter of Dr. Nichols in the *Missionary Herald* for 1883, p. 229.

[2] See *supra*, p. 120 f.

[3] See *supra*, p. 124 f.

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way. Such instances as these came to light when my primary intention was a study of the use of wooden arrows for killing birds.

An inquiry about the names of trees and the use of timbers led to the topic of making and using wooden figures for magical purposes. Woodcraft, wood-carving, and religion are associated.

There is no fallacy so great as that of supposing that data may be collected and retained in mutually exclusive divisions. For example, a study of proverbs leads to native ideas concerning government, succession to office, and standards of conduct. The Ovimbundu say, "A turtle cannot climb on a tree stump, some one has to place it there." What is the meaning of this proverb? There are some men who occupy positions for which they have no ability; such men have been chosen through influence. The normal successor to chieftainship and kingship is the eldest son of the deceased man's principal wife, but if this rightful successor is stupid, some other son will be chosen. Yet the foolish youth may have friends who see their own advantage in having a weak ruler; they therefore combine to place him in office. The turtle has been placed on the tree stump, since it could not climb there.

In addition, folklore shows projection of the mentality of human beings into the lives of animals. Bird cries, with their supposed calls and answers, indicate that the birds have their family relationships involving strife, love, jealousy, and generosity. To the Ovimbundu, birds are a feathered human community.

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Proverbs reveal a philosophy which is expressed by the German *Weltanschauung*. "If you are full of food, do not climb on a leopard's back; the leopard may be hungry." This means that one should not be foolishly exalted through good fortune. "You cannot tie a buck's head in a cloth; the horns will stick out," expresses the idea that crime cannot be concealed. "Hot water does not burn a house, and cold water does not make mush," is a sarcastic reply to one who boasts of things he cannot do. A riddle may express a philosophical train of thought. "What is it that lives while it dies and dies while it lives?" This is the log of wood the end of which is from time to time pushed farther into the fire. Like a human life, the log is being slowly consumed while yet living. Such examples as these call attention to a welding of thought, language, nature lore, and ideas that regulate conduct.

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In considering food supply and occupations, division of labor on a sex basis is clear. Social sanctions have determined the appro-

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priateness of certain tasks for males and females respectively, and individuals reflect these attitudes in their ideas and conduct.

My interpreter and others who were questioned laughed at the idea that men and women might interchange their occupations in the course of house-building. A woman collects wood for fuel, but not for house-building. Structural work is in the hands of men who dig the foundations, erect the poles, tie the crosspieces and add the roof. Women carry water for mixing the clay which is puddled by children; men, women, and children apply wet clay to the wattle walls. "Suppose a man should carry water?" I asked. "He would be laughed at and people would say that he was a he-woman," came the ready answer.

Women invariably make pottery among the Ovimbundu, but this is not always so in Negro tribes. Women of the Ovimbundu are likewise basket-makers, but they do not make mats, for this occupation is considered suitable for men only. Only women pound corn; before daybreak the heavy wooden pestles are at work and until sunset the rocks reserved for this operation are the centers of female activity, which includes singing and gossip. Only men herd cattle and only males are hunters. Women and children are the collectors of wild fruits and caterpillars, but only men take honey from the hives.

Agriculture and the preparation of food are entirely in the hands of the women. Men never eat with women; the latter have to carry the prepared food to the men's communal house in the middle of the village. Both men and women catch fish, but there are methods appropriate for each sex. There is a sex-division of labor without any implication of the inferiority of women.

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Occupations cannot be studied merely in a formal way, for, although the tasks are performed every day, a ceremonial element is involved. A clay pit is consecrated by the killing of a fowl; so also is the rock which is used as a base for pounding grain. The young blacksmith is initiated after two years of apprenticeship. On this occasion a dog is killed with the hammer which the master made for his pupil and the blood of the sacrificed animal is sprinkled on the tools. The remainder of the ritual and belief has been described in connection with occupations of the Ovimbundu. Study of the blacksmith's work was begun as research in technology; but failure to purchase the large hammer, even for a tempting sum, led to the discovery of considerable ritual.

Abstention from sexual relationships is enjoined on men and women who are going fishing. That copulation would induce the

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Inheritance of movable goods was traditionally entirely matrilineal. Today informants are confused as to what ought to be done. Inquiry about particular cases will reveal that often no movable property was left by the deceased, it having been used to pay for such expenses of the illness and funeral as the purchase of medicines and the buying of animals to be slaughtered at the feasts.

Where there is movable property, the transmission of it to the heirs is carried out in a rather informalized way, as so often happens in Umbundu social activities. The actual division of property is undertaken by a kinsman of the deceased. This should apparently be the most senior kinsman. It may be a cross-cousin or 'brother' or a sister's son.[29] How it is decided who is the senior kinsman, and who are fitted to participate in the share-out is not very clear. Nor does it seem that there is any effective device against the sharer-out giving himself the lion's share, except the general pressures and reciprocities of kinship. The principle accepted in the share-out is that inheritance should be a reflection of the relations which existed with the dead man, and also be a reward of funeral services. Nothing is kept for kin who are away working, and a son who did not keep in contact with his father would be omitted from the share-out.

By inheritance a man can increase his small stock of possessions. He is unlikely to receive anything much in the way of money, and since there is no land shortage, and, as yet, little in the way of valuable immovable property such as brick

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rubber trade to be reconciled with the statement by Childs that fear of sorcery was increasing (Childs pp. 57–58)? I suggest that the final disintegration of the old kinship groups may have been marked by particularly sharp social tensions, but that once these groups were in fact dissolved and a new form of social relations established the fear of sorcery may have declined. It should also be remembered that as indicated in Chapter V the present-day economic values of the Ovimbundu do not lead to expectations that a prosperous individual will share his wealth with poorer kinsmen, as was the case in the time of the rubber trade. Hence accusations of sorcery based on disappointed expectations of generosity are unlikely to arise.

Another aspect of the question which cannot be explored here in detail is the lack of agreement on the causality of classes of happenings or individual events. Thus one informant will say that a woman's pains in childbirth are due to sorcerers among her kin, another will say that they are caused by God (as we would say, are natural).

[29] Hambly, pp. 199–200.

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houses, coffee plants and so on there is little likelihood of disputes arising about the inheritance of land claims. A woman's property should be given to her sisters, after her children have had their cut. In one case a man inherited his sister's debts but allowed her children to inherit her property, 'lest they be sad'. A wife's fields return to her husband.

Inheritance is then a process by which the relations of certain kin, both sons and sister's sons, with the deceased are recognized by the transmission of his property. As with other aspects of Umbundu kinship, while the existence of the kinship tie provides the basis on which to found a relationship, its content is determined by the nature of the contacts between the individuals involved and the services given.

Although there is a definite tendency for men of chiefly stock to have longer pedigrees than other individuals there is no chiefly genealogy. When Paulo, the elder of the school of Epalanga, told me that had he not been blind he might have been chief of Gumba, he quoted the names of four chiefs to whom he was related. The chieftancy is not tied to a lineage, but can be held by any individual who can claim links with a former chief or chiefs. People 'of the blood of the chiefs' in no sense form a differentiated group of aristocrats significant in social life.

In similar fashion membership of the spirit-linked professions and of certain cults seems to have been a matter of succession of one individual to the role of another.[30] Membership of the hunting and smithing professions descended patrilineally, but if a hunter or smith had no son his position could be succeeded to by a daughter's son.[31]

7. *Kinship in a Changing Society*

From this, and from other chapters, a picture of Umbundu kinship may emerge as something so blurred, confused, and confusing, as hardly to merit the term 'kinship system', yet at

[30] I.e. rather than admission to a corporate group of hunters. A man can inherit his father's hunting spirit before the latter's death; in Epalanga Batista had received the hunting spirit of his father Epalata.

[31] My informants were not agreed as to whether a sister's son could inherit in default of a son.

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602 183 the same time clearly an important part of social life. Kinship norms are confused, as is the correct term to use in a particular relationship. Ritual and jural sanctions are lacking, as are institutions based on the regular co-operation of groups of kinsmen. Yet a man likes to live with kinsfolk and there is a tendency for kin to cluster together in a neighbourhood.

602 621 By the very facts, that so many of a man's neighbours are his kinsmen, and that there is very little marked differentiation between the behaviour towards different categories of kin, kinship is robbed of any great specificity of content. It might be said that it is the quantity rather than the quality of kinship ties that makes kinship significant in establishing a 'sense of community' in a neighbourhood, in that the multiplicity of local kin ties creates some identification between a man's range of kin and his neighbourhood. At the same time a kinship tie provides a basis on which a closer relationship may be built by reciprocal services. It appears that the inheritance of property 602 428 recognizes kinship in this way by recognizing claims not on the basis of strict genealogical proximity but on the quality of the relationship.

128 A discussion of marriage and the household must be left to the next chapter. The outline given of the present kinship system is sufficiently clear to begin an examination of the reasons for the changes. This must rely to some extent on speculation, owing to a lack of information on the actual working of the kinship system while it was in transition to its present form.

613 178 The key change is the disappearance of the kinship groups. These, it seems, disappeared because of their high degree of dependence on the particular type of economy existing before 1911. It has already been argued that the distinction between the patrikin and the matrikin is an attempt to isolate economic claims and conflicts from village and political relationships, and that the giving of loans without right of repayment within the matrikin was called for by a trading system in which credit played an important part. With the end of the trade the wealth passing through Umbundu hands declined sharply, and there was neither need for funds to meet trading losses nor currency to provide them. A man obtained money either by growing crops

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587 patrilateral cross-cousin, the reason for this being apparently to enable him to look after the children. Other marriages of a widow with her dead husband's kin were and are forbidden under pain of mystical sanctions. Thus, marriage with one's [684] dead wife's sister would lead to the latter's death through her sister's spirit. Illness or death was suggested as the penalty for marriage with a mother's brother's widow, although I know of two cases of such marriages happening. The reason for this prohibition against any marriage by a widow or widower with the kin of a deceased spouse is given as being that it is wrong to mix the blood.

684 Adultery is subject to mystical sanctions in the illness called *ondjamba* which seems to involve swelling of the legs. This afflicts not the guilty party but the other spouse (whether husband or wife) and the children.[18] I was also told by some informants that this illness affected the other spouse if there were no children; if there were children adultery would endanger their lives and the life of the innocent spouse. Some [183] people do not believe in this nowadays; however the line between believers and non-believers cannot be equalled with that between pagan and Christian or old and young. It is of course impossible to say how frequent adultery is in any community. Informants complain of the frequency of adultery. It should be noted that public opinion seems to condemn it strongly, and men who have discovered their wives being unfaithful usually send them away. The adulterer has to pay a heavy fine, assuming that he does not move away. The usual figure given for a fine was two cattle and a big pig, though in practice the fine would be smaller; in one case in 1948 it was 200 escudos (£2 10s.) and a pig. The word for the man who commits adultery with one's wife, or who marries one's ex-wife, is *tjikwelume* (he of jealousy) a word already referred to in the account of the kinship terminology. There is a rule against eating with him and if one goes to his funeral it is said that one's own death will soon follow. There is a similar rule against a woman eating with the wife of a man with whom she has committed adultery.

[18] For a detailed discussion of this concept, see Hastings, pp. 111–25. It is not nowadays believed that it afflicts people guilty of pre-marital sexual relations.

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do not know how Kafelo and Lusase came to hear of the case). In practice, their role was that of any other spectator in trying to bring about a settlement, although a chief has, as was noted, the right to a commission on any indemnification. The right of spectators to intervene is not based on any particular relationship to those involved nor on any reputation for wisdom. There is in fact no organized routine for determining who may and who must turn up and who may and who must speak. Spectators and speakers are simply members of the neighbourhood community, some related to Sapapula, some simply fellow-villagers, and it is natural that in present Umbundu society, lacking clearly-defined social groups, the crowd that assembles on such an occasion should look like a chance gathering. Its lack of recognized procedure, of accepted leadership, and of specific criteria of recruitment are all typical of the neighbourhood community among the contemporary Ovimbundu.

Despite the 'unorganized' character of this gathering, there exists evidently a set of generally accepted symbolic values, which are accepted by Christian and pagan, by young and old. Thus Nahoka claimed as evidence that she had not committed adultery her meal with Kapapelo's wife, and the latter in turn offered as evidence that adultery had been committed a statement that her husband had made a gift of soap to Nahoka. These actions provide presumptive evidence of innocence or guilt since an adulterer or adulteress may not eat under apparently mystical sanctions with the spouse of the person with whom he or she has committed adultery, and the giving of gifts by a man to a woman implies a sexual relationship. These actions were presumably recognized as convincing evidence in the days when there existed a formal court system, and continue to be recognized as such at the present day.

The nature of contemporary social relations, as being the end-product of a series of acts between individuals rather than as the content of jural norms defined by status, is also revealed in the dispute, particularly in the episode at Justino's. Sapapula does not complain that Kapapelo had not behaved as a villager should to his headman, but that he had not been grateful for having been given land. Kapapelo's complaint that Saviel, Sapapula's sister's son, had attempted to seduce his wife was,